

# THE STORY OF ISRAEL.

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## TWENTY LESSONS

BY  
EDWARD A. HORTON.

*EIGHTH EDITION.*

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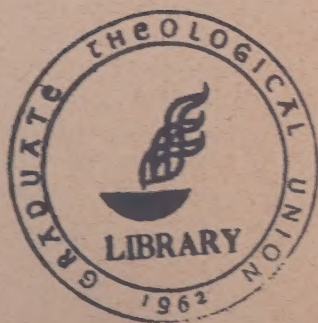
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## PREFACE.

These lessons attempt to give information as to the characters and events in Hebrew history after the times of Elijah and Elisha down to the birth of Jesus. The subject has a twofold value; first because of what the Hebrews actually suffered and achieved as a nation, and also because Christianity had its birthplace in Palestine. While the latest results of Biblical study have been consulted in preparing these lessons, the aim of the author has been to render everything into popular form. For that reason many lights and shades and fine distinctions will not be found in this particular grade: those desiring details of this character can get them in the Advanced series.

I would suggest to teachers that their instruction can be made more interesting by using the pictures of the Primary grade, many of which are most excellent. These illustrations may quicken interest in the pupils. A second aid, more especially for the teacher, can be obtained by consulting the lessons of the Advanced grade, from which suggestions may be derived valuable to the teachers, but not necessary to the classes of the Intermediate. Those books which may be consulted with benefit are mentioned here and there in the notes to the lessons.

EDWARD A. HORTON.



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## LESSON I.

### THE FARMER PREACHER, — AMOS.

LESSON TEXT.—“Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live.”—AMOS v. 14.

[Let the teacher select passages from the book of Amos for the pupils to read.]

Let those who will hang rapturously o'er  
The flowing eloquence of Plato's page,  
Repeat, with flashing eye, the sounds that pour  
From Homer's verse as with a torrent's rage;

But Judah's hallowed bards to me  
Are dear: Isaiah's noble energy;  
The temperate grief of Job; the artless strain  
Of Ruth and pastoral Amos; the high songs  
Of David; and the tale of Joseph's wrongs,  
Simply pathetic, eloquently plain.

SIR AUBREY DE VERE.

#### I. WHAT LIES BEFORE US.

In the lessons already published, “Early Old Testament Narratives,” we followed the course of Hebrew history down to the times of Elijah and Elisha. At this period everything grows clearer. We are not obliged to guess so much or to call things legends. The power of the Jews as a nation begins now, as we study the records which tell of the doings that are treated in the following lessons. There will be exciting scenes, great leaders, bitter wars, and terrible disasters. Let us try together to make the old centuries in Palestine real. We can do it by a little effort; and then we shall not only know more about the wonderful story of Israel, but we shall have traced the stream of preparation that flowed on from Elisha to Jesus. We shall be able to see how God led on the religious growth of the world.

#### II. PROPHETS.

What do we mean by a prophet? Amos was one; but, perhaps he differed from Elijah, and others after him. Were they all alike? Most certainly not. We shall see that this is so as we take up Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the rest. But, after all, a likeness is on them all. They have one root, just as in any family we find differences, or in one trade men differ as to how it shall be carried on.

The Jews thought a great deal of prophets. Often the people became bad and headstrong, and then the poor prophets suffered. There were “schools of prophets,” where men were trained to say wise things; but good did not always come out of them.

A prophet of Israel was one who tried to tell what God had told him. He claimed that God, or Jahweh, as the name was then, had spoken to him; and he must repeat the message. Some prophets told dreams, what they meant, and how to escape danger. Some were very much like soothsayers, and read out warnings from animals and interpreted signs. But others, of a nobler kind, preached and reasoned, and foretold coming events, just as a reformer would to-day.

#### III. AMOS.

At a farm in Tekoa, a village on a hill, not far from Bethlehem, about eight hundred years before the birth of Jesus, a young man worked day by day. He had not laid up much money. He acted as shepherd, and trimmed the sycamore trees that grew so numerous on the place. His name was Amos. The people

in Tekoa knew him to be thoughtful and earnest. He did not go around with the other young people. Such reading as he could get Amos studied closely. But those who labored with him often heard the young man mutter to himself; and sometimes Amos would break out, and say: "Alas that our people should go so far astray. They have strange gods. Jahweh is angry. Woe to Israel!" Some persons thought him crazy, others wondered at his queer ways. One old man, who had been to Jerusalem and other places, said that Amos was right.

One day Amos was missing. He was not on hand to trim the row of sycamore trees down on the lower part of the farm, where the job had been set for the morning. Everybody wondered, but concluded that it was about like Amos, anyway.

The farmer had turned preacher and prophet. He knew that his friends would laugh if he told his plans. So off he started, without a word, to Bethel, a place where the Jews held religious rites, a town of importance, and full of royalty. There he denounced the sins of the people.

#### IV. WARNINGS.

The chief priest, Amaziah, who had charge of the law and order there in Bethel, was half amused and half annoyed. "Who is this," he said, "that comes to make a noise? Go back! leave us, and try not to prophesy. You are a babbler." But Amos held his ground long enough to pour out a grand warning. He said: "Jahweh told me to prophesy. He came, and bid me warn you all of the woe that waits. Turn, turn, or ye are lost. Jahweh hates your burnt-offerings: he wants justice, goodness, and righteousness. I am no prophet's son, I did not graduate from a school of prophets; but I am Jahweh's messenger. Beware! the foe hovers in the north. He will descend and crush Israel. Jahweh is just and mighty: he will give you over to the enemy. Turn, turn, O ye wicked, and be saved."

Probably Amos went back to his home, driven by the priests. Afterward the book was compiled that bears his name. It is a noble series of chapters, full of fine expressions and rare figures. We have no facts as to the latter part of this prophet's life, but the calamities came that he prophesied.

#### V. CLASS TALKS.

Different kind of prophets. How does God speak to human beings? Look up the subject of Baal-worship. What was it? Did the Jews worship golden calves at the time of Amos? What was the chief sin that Amos rebuked? Can you find out how much effect Amos's warnings had? Did his prophecy come true?

#### VI. LESSON TOPICS AND REVIEW.

- I. Prophecy.
- II. Tekoa.
- III. Bethel.
- IV. Baal-worship.
- V. Two Kingdoms.
- VI. Amos's Character.
- VII. His Message.

#### VII. SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS.

Consult "The Prophets of Israel," by Cornill. Also "The Prophets of Israel," by W. Robertson Smith. Toy's "The Religion of Israel" will always be helpful for main facts. The Encyclopædia Britannica furnishes valuable articles. The teacher should try to make the character of Amos live again. He was a genuine, strong man; native product of Jewish tendencies.

## LESSON II.

### THE PREACHER OF TENDERNESS,—HOSEA.

LESSON TEXT.—“I desire mercy and not sacrifice.”—HOSEA vi. 6.

Softly the tuneful shepherd leads  
The Hebrew flocks to flowery meads:  
He marks their path with notes divine,  
While fountains spring with oil and wine.  
Rivers of peace attend his song,  
And draw their milky train along.  
He jars, and, lo! the flints are broke;  
But honey issues from the rock.

ISAAC WATTS.

#### I. CAUSES OF TROUBLE.

The preceding lesson has shown some of the reasons why Amos warned Israel of coming trouble. The people and priests were adopting false worship from their neighbors. Or the kings were seeking help from other nations, and paying heavily for it. The kingdom of Ephraim, or the northern government, with Samaria as centre, was full of discord. King after king was killed. Matters were drifting: no one felt safe. The great Assyrian hosts were darkening the north. This was not far from 740 years before our era. Along this time Israel began to fall into the hands of her enemies. Outwardly prosperous, this was but a fever color, not health; and by 725 years B.C. the terrible end came.

#### II. HOSEA.

Amos belonged to the southern kingdom, and went north to rebuke the people of that land. Hosea was born in the north, and lived in the heart of the life there. Yet both prophets saw the same evils, and were roused to go forth and do service for their God.

But Hosea, being of the north,—a citizen, neighbor, friend,—did not so easily denounce and threaten. Amos, a stranger, belonging to another government, would naturally be severer. Hosea spoke more tenderly: he could not bring himself to use hard, iron-like words. He knew that Ephraim, or Northern Israel, was full of goodness, but it was not put forth. “Ephraim is a half-baked cake,” said he. What an odd expression! But just true, because the people were greatly in the dough state: they were not made up in their minds, like true men, as to duty and right.

But the gentler tone of Hosea was caused by another experience. He had gone through some family trials; his heart was softened; he had learned in tears the lesson of forgiveness.

#### III. TENDERNESS OF JAHWEH.

We use the word “Jahweh” in the place of Jehovah, or the God of Israel. Now, Amos pictured Jahweh as sure to punish. Hosea said, Jahweh will forgive. Both were frank and bold in telling the Jews how bad they were, but Hosea wanted these sinners to know that God is love. He tried to persuade the people to be good, and so win the smile of God.

## IV. WHAT WE KNOW.

Nothing comes to us about Hosea as to his personal life. Let us paint our thoughts of what he might have been, in a little picture. Like Amos, not belonging to any "school of the prophets," but a man of middle age, and so older than Amos. He knew sorrow, and had learned much in the school of bitter experience. A man of some education and means; opposed to the priests and the leaders; in love with Israel's past; proud of her religious mission; indignant over the base behavior of the rulers; alarmed at the impending dangers.

Amos came to Bethel, denounced the wickedness there, and went home to friends and work. But Hosea stood among his countrymen: he could not get away. Day by day the lines grew harder on his face, and the beard grayer from care. His wife did not believe in him or care for his grand mission. Friends told him to be sensible, and stop trying to cure what could not be helped. Poor Hosea flinched not, but grew old and died, leaving the book somewhat put in shape, that bears his name as a testimony.

Let us honor Hosea. He was a poet-preacher. He put his heart and soul into the appeal which he made. His words were full of sunshine and pleading; yet we seem to hear the sobs of grief sounding through the chapters of his book, as he thinks of the miseries that will surely fall on Ephraim, whom he loves as a child. Tradition points out Hosea's grave in Eastern Jordan.

Hosea and Amos are really the oldest of the Hebrew prophets. Before their time books were not much written: everything was oral, and handed down from tongue to tongue. But now the Jewish people began to write out their laws and thoughts. So we may say that the books of Amos and Hosea were about the first to be written, of the literature of the Bible.

We shall see how Samaria fell, how the tribes were lost, and how the despised prophets were proven true.

## V. CLASS TALKS.

How do you compare Hosea and Amos? Which do you like better? Was it considered a great thing to be a prophet? (Be careful in answering this question.) How do the Indians of America keep their history? Was this the way with the early Hebrews? How do you suppose Hosea learned what Jahweh wanted him to say? From what source do we learn a great deal about ancient history? The Assyrian records. Why does it seem worth the pains to study these old books and inquire about the events?

## VI. LESSON TOPICS AND REVIEW.

- I. Israel not all Bad.
- II. Contrast Love and Fear.
- III. Hosea's Character.
- IV. Oral History.
- V. State of the World in Hosea's Time.
- VI. Beginning of the Bible Books.
- VII. "Ephraim," "Judah," "Israel," and other titles.

## VII. SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS.

Do not fail to have a map—a small cheap one will do—by which to show the two kingdoms, leading towns, and the relation of other countries. In addition to books already mentioned, Stanley's "Jewish Church" is a good help. "The Bible for Learners," vol. ii., American edition, will prove very useful along this whole course of lessons.



## LESSON III.

### TERROR FROM THE NORTH.

LESSON TEXT.—“When I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me.”—MICAH vii. 8.

Up the pathway of the ages,  
From the dim land of the past,  
Come the sound of battle-shouting,  
Armor clang, and bugle-blast.  
*Minot J. Savage.*

#### I. LINKS.

In our last lesson we studied the life and mission of Hosea. He lived through the hard times and the bright times of the northern kingdom. For King Jeroboam II., who reigned over forty years, had a brilliant record. But when he died, about B.C. 744, there came a sad change. Probably Hosea did not live to see the downfall of the kingdom, which we are now to hear about. But the noble prophet saw the disaster coming, and his heart was heavy. We shall see how one misfortune after another fell on the Jews, how the great nation of Assyria pressed down from the north and swept them away, as a rushing flood of water from some broken reservoir carries houses and men down to destruction when once it breaks loose.

#### II. MUTTERINGS.

After King Solomon died, the kingdom over which he ruled, and which was the old, strong Israel, was divided. The people could not, or would not, live together in peace. So ten of the tribes organized the new kingdom which we have talked about so far,—the northern one,—sometimes called Ephraim or the Ten Tribes. The capital city was Samaria. The other part was the southern kingdom, with Jerusalem as the centre; and this kingdom went by the name of Judah.

In this lesson we shall see how the northern kingdom was destroyed, never to be restored. It lasted about two hundred and forty years, and then went out in a terrible way.

The Assyrians were like a mighty flock of hawks and vultures, flying in the northern sky. We do not know much about their early history. To-day explorers are digging in the ruins of cities, along the Euphrates River, finding stone tablets and records, that help us to understand history better. These ruins belong to the Assyrian people. They conquered everything. They swarmed like locusts. Poor Israel, not very strong in battle, heard and was frightened. Perhaps the next captives would be in their own country. Sure enough, it was so.

#### III. DOWNFALL.

One of the prophets warned the people in these words: “See! he is coming, swift of foot and light; not one of them stumbles, not one is weary. His arrows are many and sharp; his bows are all ready. The sound of his chariots is like thunder. Like the rush of storm-waves, like the roar of a tempest, is his coming. Behold, his hosts turn the day into night.”

At the first the people of Israel said to the Assyrians, We will not fight, we are too small, and paid tribute to the king



of Assyria. But afterward, thinking to do better, the ruler of Israel refused to pay any more money, and asked the king in Egypt, at the south, to help. Then the Assyrians were angry, and gathered a large army, marching at once to capture Samaria, the capital. But the Jews got together food, arms, and all the soldiers they could, and fought it out behind the walls of Samaria. The siege lasted three years. In that time battle on battle took place. The enemy would rush on the walls by night, and the Jews would drive them back. Sometimes the air was thick with arrows flying from both sides. The Assyrians brought up battering-rams, and tried to break down the walls. Finally, the food gave out, and with a rush the eager foe poured into the city. What a sight met the eyes of the northern host! Starvation and destruction had left marks everywhere.

#### IV. THE TEN LOST TRIBES.

Now and then some one lectures or writes a book about the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. You may have wondered what it all meant. He was trying to explain what became of the people who were left in Samaria and the country round about, after this awful war. Some say the Gypsies are the ones. Some claim that they once lived in America before the Indians. This is all fancy. What we do know is that the Assyrians carried away the ten tribes, or most of them, as captives, settling them in different parts of Asia Minor, making them mingle with foreigners. In their places other men and women were put, so that the kingdom of Ephraim was blotted out. The ten tribes were lost. Only a few remained in the old home. In this way did Assyria take revenge.

There is an inscription, found in excavations, which reads as follows: "I, Sargon, king of Assyria, took and occupied the city of Samaria, and carried into captivity twenty-seven thousand, two hundred and eighty of its inhabitants." This was about 720 B.C.

#### V. CLASS TALKS.

When was the old kingdom divided, and why? Which part was larger? What do we know about the Assyrians? In what part of the world did they live? How long did the northern kingdom last? What was the name of the king most famous? What were the people called, in the time of Jesus, who continued to live in this region? (Samaritans.) What have you ever heard about the Ten Lost Tribes? Do you think that the Jews were conquered simply because they were wicked?

#### VI. LESSON TOPICS AND REVIEW.

- I. Kings of the Northern Kingdom.
- II. Prophets of the Northern Kingdom.
- III. Samaria as a Stronghold.
- IV. Assyria and the Assyrians.
- V. Causes of Downfall.
- VI. Ten Lost Tribes.
- VII. Value of Excavations in Asia Minor.

#### VII. SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS.

This lesson gives a fine opportunity for making clear to the younger pupils the value of modern research in ruined cities. The Bible history and chronology are cleared up by these discoveries. Do not fail to provide interesting facts about Assyria.

## LESSON IV.

### THE STATESMAN PROPHET.

LESSON TEXT.—“Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.”—ISAIAH v. 20.

Oh, for the spirit which of old  
Proclaimed thy love and taught thy ways,  
Forth in Isaiah's thunder rolled,  
And breathed in David's tenderest lays!

*Anonymous.*

#### I. JUDAH.

The kingdom of Ephraim has disappeared. Now we are to trace the fortunes of the kingdom of Judah. The story of Israel will run through a troublous course, like a river over rocks and through gorges. Let us remember that we are now studying the head sources of the history which brings us down to the times of Jesus. The gospels claim the house of David as the beginning of the ancestry of Jesus. What is done now has relation to Christianity. We cannot go very deeply into these subjects, but enough can be told to give us greater interest in what seems so far away. One link hangs on another in the long chain of events leading to Nazareth and Calvary.

#### II. HISTORY.

About 960 B.C., when Israel divided, ten tribes went to the northern part and two tribes to the southern. Rehoboam, son of Solomon, continued as king at the south. After him were various rulers, whose names are given in the Book of Kings. Some were bad, some were good, some were both. The trouble all along arose over idolatry and wickedness in high places. Ahaz was one of the bad kings. He did not stand by his religion, but consented to the worship of other gods than Jahweh. Hezekiah was a good king, who tried to make the people worship the God of Israel. So things went on. A prophet Micah arose, and sternly rebuked Israel. We have a book in the Bible named after him. In one passage he tells the people that the Lord does not care for so much ceremony and form; that he requires justice, mercy, and humility.

During these events the northern kingdom was still existing. So it would seem that religion in Judah was not on a much higher level than in Ephraim. We come now to the great prophet Isaiah, of Jerusalem, who lived, probably, from 760 to 700 B.C., just when Samaria was captured and when the Assyrians were preparing to attack Jerusalem. There were two Isaiahs; this one wrote the first part of the book bearing that name, the other lived later, and was the author of the chapters from forty to sixty-six. We shall call this one the Statesman Prophet, Isaiah of Jerusalem; and the second, Isaiah of Babylon, the Herald of the Anointed. In olden times it was thought that the whole book was written by one person.

#### III. ISAIAH OF JERUSALEM.

This prophet was a learned, able man. He was brought up in cities, and looked at things like a statesman. King Ahaz was so foolish as to refuse to listen to him, but Hezekiah took him for

chief adviser. Thus we often see a king, in our day, refuse to have some wise man of his kingdom in the cabinet or ministry; but such headstrong conduct always brings calamity.

Although Amos came from a farm and Isaiah from a city home, yet both prophets had the same idea and begged and warned in much the same way. Both told the Jews that they had light enough to know what was right. They were a "peculiar people," specially cared for by Jahweh. Of old their God had told them what to do. It was now only a matter of obeying. And what did Isaiah say was to be obeyed? The law of the Lord, which made perfect. Trust in Jahweh; worship Him and Him alone; do away with idols. He was all-powerful, and would confound Israel's enemies.

But with the swarming Assyrians coming down on them, with Samaria captured, and many woes in trade and prosperity, it was not easy to have faith. Isaiah persuaded Hezekiah to follow his heroic advice; and we shall see how a wonderful event helped Isaiah's cause, in our next lesson.

In chapter v. is the parable of the vineyard. Our lesson text is taken from it. Isaiah says: You are not doing all you can. See what the Lord has done for Israel, and behold the ingratitude. He went on to prophesy that a leader would arise out of Judah and give victory to the Jews. Very many think that these passages refer to Jesus, but the Jews do not acknowledge him as leader.

#### IV. TRUST IN GOD.

Isaiah's life as a man is not known to us. We are not able to look in and see his daily deeds,—to watch him going about, preaching, counselling, guiding. But, from what we read of his visions and speeches, we feel sure that he was a thunder-storm to the wicked and a light-house to the faithful. Isaiah was a cultivated Elijah,—strong, earnest, massive, devout. "In God we trust" is the motto of our country. Isaiah made that his message. He believed completely in the glorious future of the "remnant," or part, that trusted in Jahweh.

#### V. CLASS TALKS.

Who was the first king of the southern kingdom? Rehoboam. Who followed him? How many tribes went to the south? How do Amos and Isaiah resemble each other? Why is Isaiah called the statesman prophet? What part of the prophecies of Isaiah did he write? What king refused to listen to him? What king made him chief adviser? Can you apply the lesson text to men in our day? What is the first need of every man? To see things as they are. What the next? To call things by their right names.

#### VI. LESSON TOPICS AND REVIEW.

- I. Record of the Kingdom of Judah.
- II. Ahaz.
- III. Hezekiah.
- IV. Micah.
- V. Isaiah as a Prophet.
- VI. Isaiah as a Statesman.
- VII. Parable of the Vineyard.

#### VII. SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS.

There is a majesty about the character of Isaiah which should be brought out in this lesson. It is one thing to warn and threaten; another, to warn and also guide a government. Isaiah was large in mind and broad in plan. Cornill's chapter on Isaiah is full of color. On the kingdom of Judah read Knappert's "Religion of Israel," chap. xii.

## LESSON V.

### JERUSALEM SAVED.

LESSON TEXT.—“The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us.”—ISAIAH xxxiii. 22.

READ Isaiah xxxvi and xxxvii.

The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,  
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;  
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,  
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.  
Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green,  
That host with their banners at sunset were seen;  
Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath blown,  
That host on the morrow lay withered and strown.

*Lord Byron.*

#### I. ASSYRIA.

We have already learned a great deal about the mighty nation called Assyria. The warrior-kings who were at the head succeeded in conquering all the people around. Gradually their power grew, and to such an extent that nothing seemed able to stand against them. The cities of Assyria were magnificent,—full of great buildings, lined with altars of sacrifice, sounding with music, stirred by processions, and all the time growing richer. The public work was done by captives from all regions. Some of the Jews toiled like slaves, who were carried from Samaria. Assyria stood on the top of her success, and now began trouble. The story of the attack on Jerusalem is a fairy-like tale.

#### II. SENNACHERIB.

You remember, Sargon captured Samaria about 720 B.C. After this king came Sennacherib, and he was even more ambitious. About 701 B.C. this ruler looked over toward Jerusalem, and said: “I will humble the king of Judah, and make him my vassal. Why should he stand alone, when I have all the other kingdoms in my hands?”

So Sennacherib sent an army, which frightened Hezekiah, the good king, so much that the Jews begged for mercy. They did not attempt to fight: the size and splendor of the enemy was too much. So Hezekiah got together all the gold and silver he could, even taking some of the sacred goblets and articles of worship from the Temple, and sent them to the Assyrian monarch. Sennacherib replied that he would take the gold and silver, but Hezekiah must acknowledge Assyria to be over him. He did. Then the great host held back and did not burn or plunder any more.

But very soon after this Sennacherib heard that Hezekiah was not standing by his word. He had made some treaty with Egypt, down south, hoping to throw off the Assyrian power.

#### III. THE ATTACK.

Then, in his anger, the monarch of the north gathered a vast army, a mighty host. “I will teach that little Jewish king how to behave,” said Sennacherib to his generals. “Does he dare to break his word with me, the greatest ruler of the world? I will crush him, as the beetle is crushed under my foot. He shall feel the weight of my wrath, and I will show his Egyptian friend what will come upon him next.”

The people said they had never seen such an army, though many wonderful campaigns had been waged,—thousands on thousands of glittering soldiers, thousands on thousands of flashing spears, thousands on thousands of quivers and bows; chariots of war, tents by acres, constant sounds of brass cymbals; and fires for miles at every camp. The soldiers drank the small streams dry. They eat all the food of the country where they marched. Like a tornado, tearing down trees, uprooting fields, carrying away everything, the terrible foe swept down on Judah.

At last Jerusalem was reached, after several smaller cities had been destroyed in the neighborhood of the great city. The Assyrian king demanded a surrender. Strange to say, Hezekiah did not consent. Why? Because he had an equal force? That we know was not true. No! The Jewish ruler had consulted Isaiah, the prophet; and Isaiah said: "Fear not. Our God will deliver you. Trust him, and all will be well." This was noble advice, but just how Jerusalem was to be saved from this giant did not appear. Twice Hezekiah was asked to give up the city, and each time he refused. He went into the Temple and prayed.

At last Sennacherib sent word that he would waste no more words; on the next day the city would be attacked; death was threatened to every inhabitant. What a dark despair crept over many you can think. Isaiah, however, walked the streets and told the people to be hopeful; for their God would not allow the enemy to succeed.

#### IV. THE DEFEAT.

The sun went down; the stars came out; and before morning Isaiah's prophecy was proven true. A plague broke out in the Assyrian army, destroying thousands and making as many more too ill to do anything. In the Eastern countries a pestilence often falls on a city or nation, carrying off vast numbers.

Sennacherib retreated. He went back having failed; though he told a lie, and proclaimed to his people that he had made Hezekiah a vassal, having conquered Jerusalem. This he did to keep up his fame and power. But not long after he was murdered in his palace.

#### V. CLASS TALKS.

Tell what you have learned about Assyria. Who was Sargon? Who was Sennacherib? What did Hezekiah do to stop the Assyrian king from invading his country? Was it right to take things from the Temple for this purpose? Why did the Assyrian king finally attack Jerusalem? How does the record describe the overthrow of Sennacherib? An angel of the Lord smote his army. What does this mean? The Jews always ascribed the cause of such events to God and his angels. Does it mean that the pestilence was sent by Jehovah? Yes.

#### VI. LESSON TOPICS AND REVIEW.

- I. The Splendor of Assyria.
- II. Its Civilization.
- III. Sennacherib.
- IV. Influence of Isaiah over Hezekiah.
- V. Account of the Defeat.
- VI. Jewish Ideas of Providence.
- VII. Hezekiah's Illness and the Dial.

#### VII. SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS.

See, in "Stories of the Nations," volume on Assyria; also Hosmer's "The Jews," chap. iii. and iv.



## LESSON VI.

### THE BOY KING.

LESSON TEXT.—“He did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord.”—2 KINGS xxii. 2.

Father of all! in every age,  
In every clime adored,  
By saint, by savage, or by sage,  
Jehovah, Jove, or Lord!  
*Alexander Pope.*

#### I. MANASSEH.

Like day and night, following one another, so do we find the kings of Judah to be. Some were good: some were very bad. As we have seen, Hezekiah was a good one: he listened to Isaiah, he was true to the God of Israel. But after him came a man, Hezekiah's son, who ruled for fifty-five years, beginning at the age of twelve. His name was Manasseh. This king undid all that his father had so nobly settled. He restored altars of idolatry; he encouraged shameful sacrifices; he acted like a heathen, and not like a Jew. The record says that “he did evil in the sight of the Lord.” It seemed as though everything was going backward, and Israel would be destroyed from within.

#### II. THE BOY KING.

But after this long reign Manasseh died, and his son Amon took his place. Amon was like his father, and after two years his servants killed him because he behaved so badly. Then the people rose, and after much fighting put Amon's son on the throne. This new king, Josiah, was only eight years old, too young to know much about government. So other older officers governed for him until he was of age.

From all we can learn, Josiah was a boy who wanted to do right. He loved play, but had an earnest heart. So as he grew up his mind was busy: he asked questions and wanted to know the reasons for things. We shall see in the next lesson what a great reformation he carried out, but now we are looking at him as a boy king.

#### III. GROWING.

There were some at Jerusalem who wanted to do as they thought Moses might command. These were called the Moses party. They believed in the good old times of David and Solomon. They were haters of idols, and feared the new customs brought by other people. They tried to keep the Jews from marrying with foreigners, and did all in their power to show that Israel was a greater, nobler nation than any other because of its better religion. The Jews did not claim to be a strong people in arms, like the Assyrians or Egyptians; but the Moses party said, “We are not afraid to meet any foe, for Jahweh is strong to save, and He is our God.” So they argued that, if they could have the boy king on their side, then Israel would be victorious, and Jahweh would give his people great blessings.

Josiah grew in stature and wisdom. The Moses party taught him many things. What he did will be the subject of our coming lesson. But we must tell now how, after ruling like a

good king, and doing what was right in the sight of the Lord, he fell on a battle-field, pierced by the arrows of Egyptian warriors.

#### IV. THE END.

After Josiah had reigned about thirty years, and had done so much good, a report came to his ears that the Egyptian king, Necho, was intending to march through Josiah's country on a campaign against an Assyrian city. Josiah did not like this because of the hurt the Egyptian army would do to his lands, and also because he was on good terms with the king of Assyria, so that they lived together on friendly terms. Josiah thought it his duty to meet Necho and stop his march. And in this he was bold, since so much success had come to him in other enterprises. Josiah gathered an army, and went down to a place called Megiddo, part of a great plain. His little army was not of much worth when put against the swarming soldiers from the south. They laughed at the small force that Israel had, and with a rush swept them back. It was then, while Josiah was shouting: "Jahweh will give us the victory. On, do not fear! The heathen shall perish," that an archer spied him, and, bending his bow to kill a king, sent a fatal shaft.

We are told that all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. Indeed, this was a sad day for Israel. Her dark days of sorrow began to increase. We shall see Egypt from the south and Babylon from the north, like two millstones, grinding poor Israel into dust. The death of Josiah was about 609 B.C.

#### V. CLASS TALKS.

Who was the good king that listened to Isaiah? What was the name of his son? Was he like his father? What do we mean by the Moses party? How young was Josiah when made king? Did he rule for himself at first? Where was he killed, and how? How many years did he reign?

#### VI. LESSON TOPICS AND REVIEW.

- I. Manasseh.
- II. Mosaic Party.
- III. Josiah's Character.
- IV. Description of Royal Life and Difficulties.
- V. Megiddo.
- VI. Egyptian Warfare.
- VII. What made a "Good King."

#### VII. SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS.

This lesson should not be allowed to encroach on the next one, which will take up Josiah's reformation of Israel. We simply sketch Josiah's life-work now, leaving for the next lesson his special reforms in the law, worship, and customs of the Jews. Spaulding's "Later Heroes of Israel" contains a chapter on King Josiah, very full and interesting.

## LESSON VII.

### THE REFORMATION.

LESSON TEXT.—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and keep his commandments alway.”—  
DEUT. xi. i.

(See 2 Kings xxii, 2 Chronicles xxxiv.)

The Spirit breathes upon the word,  
And brings the truth to sight;  
Precepts and promises afford  
A sanctifying light.  
A glory gilds the sacred page,  
Majestic like the sun;  
It gives a light to every age,—  
Its course is never run.

*William Cowper, Alt.*

#### I. GOING BACK.

In our last lesson we saw the boy-king carried off, mortally wounded, in a chariot, from the fierce battle at Megiddo. And we learned how badly all the people felt, how they mourned Josiah's death. This grief arose because he was good,—a good ruler and a good man. But in what was he good? There must have been something particular in his life and reign that caused the people to feel so grateful and loving toward him. Yes, there was one great act on his part that seemed to the Jews grand. We have called it the reformation, and it is the subject of this lesson.

#### II. THE DISCOVERY.

About 622 B.C., when King Josiah had reigned eighteen years, and was twenty-five years old, a strange discovery was made in the temple at Jerusalem. A priest, named Hilkiah, had chief charge of the temple, and was busy trying to make everything in it better and more to his mind. One day a private secretary of the king was at the temple talking over matters with Hilkiah; this secretary or scribe's name was Shaphan. Suddenly Hilkiah said: “I have found a wonderful book, a book of laws, telling us how we ought to worship. It has laws all written down, and it warns us that if we disobey there will be awful punishments. It is the word of our God, Jahweh, and we must have the king see it.”

Then Hilkiah read some of the discovered book, or parchments, to Shaphan, and he grew very serious. Going to the king, he told him all about the discovery. Then Josiah requested that the book should be read to him; and, when he heard it, he, too, was somewhat frightened, saying, probably, something like this: “This is what our God wants us to do; and if we disobey we shall be captured by enemies, and put to death. What sinners we are, and how different are our customs! There is but one thing to do: what the book tells us to do we must carry out, for, lo! the whole land is deep in iniquity.”

The next thing Josiah did was to call together his chief officers and advisers; and they told the king it would be well to consult a prophetess, named Huldah, wife of one of the councillors. They did so; and she urged Josiah to go forward with the work of reform, threatening terrible sufferings to Israel, but promising safety to Josiah because he was so willing to do what was right.

#### III. WHAT WAS DONE.

Josiah at once called a meeting of the nobles and the people

## THE REFORMATION.

in Jerusalem. Then he told in public what Jahweh commanded, and all about the new book. Shouts went up of approval, and it was decided to carry out the laws as set down in the volume found in the temple.

This was not easy, for the old habits were deep-rooted. But Josiah was bold, and he had the support of a strong party. The hardest work of reform was to shut up all the places of worship, the little churches, in the kingdom, and compel the people to go to church in Jerusalem. Just imagine that in Massachusetts an order should go out from the governor, closing the churches in every town and village except one great church in Boston. Of course, we live in times so different that we can hardly think it; but this was the way it happened in Judea, the time we have mentioned. Everybody was to have only one temple, the great, glorious one at Jerusalem.

Then Josiah ordered the idols to be burned, and bonfires blazed constantly. He ordered the altars used for other kinds of worship than Jahweh's to be destroyed. He regulated the feasts, and sent out directions as to ever so many observances, all of them intended to sweep out idolatry, to make Jerusalem the holy city, and to lead the people to worship one God. Josiah went up to Bethel, where Amos appeared, and drove out the priests of Baal, and changed the whole conditions of things.

### IV. THE RESULTS.

The better part of Israel hailed all this reform, some did not. This book, which started the reformation, was probably the same as the Book of Deuteronomy. We do not know just how it was written or when. Now there were two results, one good, one bad. The good was in the clearing out of superstition, in stopping heathenish worship, in calling the Jews back to a purer religion. The bad was in making one spot, one church, the only holy and acceptable place for worship; in taking away from the people the right to worship God without a great priesthood, and heavy taxes; in dividing religion from every-day life.

### V. CLASS TALKS.

How old was Josiah when the book of laws was found? What is there in our Bible answering to it? The Book of Deuteronomy. Who was the man that found it? Hilkiah, a priest. How much do you think that fear had to do with Josiah's action? If there was so much harm done, why do we call this a reformation? Because the good, at the time, outweighed the hurt. What party stood back of Josiah? The Moses party. Why so called? Because the members of it went back to Moses for their laws and leadership.

### VI. LESSON TOPICS AND REVIEW.

- I. Story of the Discovery.
- II. Motives of Hilkiah.
- III. Position of Josiah.
- IV. What was the Book?
- V. The Great Changes made.
- VI. Good and Evil of them.
- VII. General Picture of the New Conditions.

### VII. SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS.

This is a large subject, and one that must be skilfully handled for the younger pupils. Try to compare things old with things of to-day, to mark the radical changes Josiah attempted. For those who have time and interest we suggest reading Renan, "History of the People of Israel," vol. iii. chap. xiii. and xiv.; also Cornill's "Prophets of Israel," chapter on "Deuteronomy."

## LESSON VIII.

### THE MESSENGER OF COMING DESTRUCTION.

LESSON TEXT.—“Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with your whole heart.”—JER. xxix. 13.

(See Jeremiah xxiif., xxvi., xxvii.)

Lord, thou hast been thy people's rest  
Through all their generations,—  
Their refuge when by troubles pressed,  
Their hope in tribulations:  
Thou, ere the mountains sprang to birth,  
Or ever thou hadst formed the earth,  
Art God from everlasting.

*James Montgomery.*

#### I. SOME HISTORY.

We must follow a little the succession of kings after Josiah. His son, Jehoiakim, was put on the throne by the conquering Egyptian monarch; and the ruler of Israel was simply a subject to Egypt. This man did not care for his father's reformation, and took no interest in the matter. He persecuted prophets, and acted badly. In 605 B.C. the new king of Babylon defeated the Egyptians, and Jehoiakim then submitted to Nebuchadnezzar, the great warrior from the north. So the Jews were paying taxes, first to some one from the south, and then to some one from the north. It was battle and beating and suffering most of the time: poor Israel was ground between the millstones of other nations. Jehoiakim rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar after three years, and was whipped for it. His son, Jehoiachin, was put in his place. But worse yet remained: this last king was carried off with many others to Babylon, and the Chaldeans (of Babylon) placed another son of Josiah (Zedekiah) on the throne of Judah; and it is with him that Jeremiah, our subject, had most to do. This was about 597 B.C.

#### II. JEREMIAH.

These were terrible times for the Jews. There was no comfort or good news from any quarter. A large number of Jews, who trusted their feelings too much, cried out all the time in these misfortunes: “Never fear, we are coming out all right. Jahweh has promised to care for us, his chosen people.” Yet here they were, going down and down, deeper into misery. Jeremiah had been warning the people of ruin, telling them that the Chaldeans would surely crush temple, city, and nation. “Woe, woe, woe,” was his great word. “Woe to Israel for her sins! Woe to priest and king! Woe to the farms and the homes of dear Judah! The power of Babylon shall fall on you all and destroy!”

#### III. WHO WAS HE?

We know more of Jeremiah, as a man, than of most of the other prophets. He began to preach about 627 B.C., when very young. Though he lived through Josiah's reign he did not appear much in public affairs. He never had a home of his own, but lived solitary, giving all his time and talent to his mission. And that mission, in his eyes, was to foretell the downfall of Israel, in the providence of God, and to prepare the people for the coming affliction.

He believed that God was using Nebuchadnezzar to punish Israel for her sins. He was often in danger of death for what he so boldly said. Once, out on the street of Jerusalem, when he prophesied destruction, the listeners wanted to kill him. It seemed



blasphemous for any man to say that the temple would be torn down. Jeremiah thought his end had come. But at the last moment he cried out: "Jahweh has commanded me to say this. Your God and mine gives me the message. I cannot do otherwise than utter it." Thereupon the maddened crowd grew still, and the old reverence for a prophet (sent of God) saved Jeremiah.

#### IV. THE ROLL.

At another time, when Jehoiakim was king, Jeremiah put down in writing his oracles and warnings. This was done by a faithful follower named Baruch. Jeremiah dictated to him, as one would dictate a letter or article now. Baruch promised to read it all to the people, and was allowed a place in the temple. But the son of the king heard Baruch and was alarmed. He ran to the palace and told his father, Jehoiakim, who sent for Baruch and his roll. Friends of Baruch warned him not to go, so he and Jeremiah ran away and left the roll in the room. When the king was told this, he ordered Jehudi, an official, to get it and to read out loud. The wrath of the king was terrible. Jehudi, to stop his fury, took a knife, cut the pages into small pieces, and threw them into the fire.

The king issued orders that Jeremiah and Baruch should be put in prison; but they escaped, and, in the place where they were hidden, the prophet dictated another set of warnings, some of them fiercer against the wicked king than the first. We shall leave part of Jeremiah's history for the next lesson, because this earnest, brave soul had a great deal to do with the events of the siege and fall of Jerusalem.

Jeremiah was not without a tender heart. It is true he often said that Jahweh would smite like a hammer and crumble Israel; but he also said, "Oh, that my head were a fountain of water, and my eyes streams of tears, that I might weep day and night for my people." His soul was heavy because of the lack of real religion and honest character among the people. There is one thing sure, he was not afraid of king or peasant.

#### V. CLASS TALKS.

What kind of experience did Israel have after Josiah died? Who was the king of Egypt when Josiah was killed? Necho. Who was the king that defeated Necho? Nebuchadnezzar. Of what people was he? The Chaldeans. What city became their capital? Babylon. Who was Jeremiah's faithful friend and secretary? What king grew angry over the roll? Jehoiakim. Can you describe the scene? Do you think that Jeremiah was too stern? How did he live? Where?

#### VI. LESSON TOPICS AND REVIEW.

- I. Sketch of History to the Siege of Jerusalem.
- II. Information as to the Chaldeans.
- III. Character of Jeremiah.
- IV. His Mission.
- V. Other Prophets, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk.
- VI. Compare Jeremiah with Hosea.
- VII. Enforce some Striking Passage from his Writings.

#### VII. SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS.

"The Bible for Learners," vol. ii., Book IV., chap. ii. and iii., will furnish full material for this lesson. An interesting comparison between Jeremiah and Isaiah is in the article "Jeremiah," *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Do not let the noble character of this austere messenger be lost sight of in undue consideration of his sad views.

## LESSON IX.

### REAPING THE WHIRLWIND.

LESSON TEXT.—“I will give them the valley of trouble for a door of hope.”—HOSEA ii. 15.

(See 2 Kings xxv., 2 Chronicles xxxvi., Jeremiah xxviii.)

Fair shines the moon, Jerusalem,  
Upon the hills that wore  
Thy glory once, their diadem  
Ere Judah's reign was o'er:  
The stars on hallowed Olivet,  
And over Zion burn,  
But when shall rise thy splendor set,  
Thy majesty return?

*Bayard Taylor.*

#### I. THE GREAT WARRIOR.

We have already heard of Nebuchadnezzar, who was a powerful ruler. He now becomes the threatening foe of Israel. It was he who boasted that he had built the walls of Babylon in fifteen days. His armies were vast, his victories many; the terror of his name spread everywhere. Made angry by the behavior of Zedekiah, who now submitted and now rebelled, the Chaldean king decided to proceed against Jerusalem and take it. This was not easy even for Nebuchadnezzar and his mighty army. For Jerusalem could be taken by force only on the north side, since on the other three sides steep hill-slopes of rock extended.

#### II. THE SIEGE.

Jerusalem fell about 586 B.C., but not until almost two years had been passed in the attack. At first Nebuchadnezzar was driven off, not by the Jews, but by the Egyptians, who made an effort to save their old friends, the Jews. The great Chaldean army raised the siege, marched away to the south, met the approaching Egyptians, who turned and ran home.

During all these events Jeremiah was having hard knocks. His enemies laughed, and scoffed: “You said that the Chaldeans would destroy us. See, they have run away. Jahweh will save us.” Now there was a so-called prophet, Hananiah, who took the side of the people, and opposed Jeremiah; and the following incident occurred. Jeremiah was wearing a yoke around his neck, in imitation of the yokes on oxen. He had sent others like it to various rulers in the neighboring countries. And his words were: “Put on the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar, or you will be destroyed. Submit to him, for Jahweh commands it.”

You can easily see that this sort of advice was not very pleasant, though it was probably sensible. Jeremiah saw no good in resisting such a mighty king, and wished to save life and property. He also felt sure that Israel was fated to suffer for her sins by coming under Chaldean bondage. Hananiah met Jeremiah one day, and, growing angry, seized the yoke we have mentioned, threw it away, and broke it. “Thus,” said he, “will our God break the yoke of the Chaldean.” Jeremiah retreated, followed by ridicule. But a little after he retorted, “You may break the yoke of wood, but there shall be yokes of iron when the Chaldeans come back.” “Ha! ha!” shouted the crowd, “yes, when the Chaldeans come back. That is never.”

They did return, after the Egyptians fled; and then there was no stopping the horrid war. Jeremiah was not an agreeable man

to have in Jerusalem. He was thrown into prison: still he kept up his warning and threats. The king was weak and changeable like a vane: now he would send for the prophet and ask advice, again he would want him killed. Once he allowed some officers to throw Jeremiah into an old, muddy cistern; but soon he had him pulled out in time to save the prophet's life. Zedekiah did not dare to put him to death, and yet he was driven to despair to hear his oracles.

### III. IN THE CITY.

Think, for a moment, of the sad condition in Jerusalem. Food grew scarce; every week the outer walls were battered in more and more; terror began to drive away sleep; the dead lay unburied; a sickening odor spread through the streets; horrible scenes went on day and night.

At last what was called the lower city was captured. The attacking force met with another obstacle, the inner wall which protected the upper city. This might have checked the victors for a while, but Zedekiah and his men fled by night. It was in vain. They were captured. A terrible fate befell the Jewish king: his sons were killed before him; then his eyes were put out, and, loaded with chains, the poor, captive ruler of Israel was carried off to Babylon.

The soldiers plundered, burnt, and levelled the city. Many families were removed to Chaldea. The treasures of the temple and palace were carried away. The glory of Jerusalem was entirely gone.

### IV. THE END OF JEREMIAH.

Jerusalem is destroyed, the king is a blind prisoner in Babylon; but where is the prophet? He was a prisoner when we last heard from him. Jeremiah escaped the misery of most of those who were prominent. He was allowed to remain in Jerusalem; but, some trouble arising, the few Jews left untouched got alarmed, and feared that Nebuchadnezzar would again slay them. Jeremiah counselled staying. The panic-stricken Jews would not listen, and dragged him away with them in a flight to Egypt. There he ended an unhappy life. It is said that he was finally stoned to death by a mob, but we have no true record.

### V. CLASS TALKS.

What do we mean by "reaping the whirlwind"? Do you think Zedekiah should have surrendered at once? Was Jeremiah right in urging his people to give up? How did an army attack a walled city in old times? Why were cities built on hills? Do cities have great walls now? Why not?

### VI. LESSON TOPICS AND REVIEW.

- I. Nebuchadnezzar.
- II. Fortifications of Jerusalem.
- III. How Jeremiah appeared to the People.
- IV. Question of Expediency.
- V. Causes of Israel's Fall.
- VI. The Pillage of Jerusalem.
- VII. Scattering of its People and the Remnant left.

### VII. SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS.

In the article "Jerusalem," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, are given many details as to the construction of the city. The whole story of the last days of the house of David is exciting and suggestive. Teachers ought to find vivid material for historic and moral lessons.

## LESSON X.

### THE PRIEST TURNED PROPHET.

LESSON TEXT.—“Behold, all souls are mine.”—EZEK. xviii. 4.

(See Book of Ezekiel, here and there.)

One saint to another I heard say, “How long?”  
I listened, but naught more I heard of the song;  
The shadows are gliding through city and plain;  
How long shall the night with its shadows remain?  
How long ere shall shine, in this glimmer of things,  
The light of which prophet in prophecy sings;  
And the gates of that city be open, whose sun  
No more to the west in its circuit shall run?

*Jones Very.*

#### I. GOING BACK.

We must go back a little from the time of the last lesson, when we followed the exciting events connected with the fall of Jerusalem, on to the death of Jeremiah. It will be remembered that the Chaldean king took a Jewish king prisoner some years before the fall of Jerusalem, carrying him and many other Jews off into Babylon and vicinity. Among these captives was a young man, son of a priest. He was intended for the priesthood, and was trained for the service of the temple. This youth, Ezekiel, made his home in Babylon, and took a deep interest in the fortunes, mostly misfortunes, of his people who were struggling in Jerusalem. News came to him quite often; and he sent back word in much the same vein of Jeremiah's oracles, telling the Jews that their doom was sure, and that they deserved it. Just how and why Ezekiel turned from priest to prophet we do not know; but we are told that, after living five years in Babylon, the heavens were open to him, by the river Chebar, and he saw visions of God. A voice said, “Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak to thee.” After that for twenty-two years he prophesied.

#### II. WHAT HE DID.

Jeremiah was alone, and sad; but Ezekiel was married, had a home, and from all we can learn did not suffer very much at the hands of the Chaldeans. We are not told what he did to support himself and the home he had. The book which he wrote shows that he did not give himself to speaking and arousing so much as some of the other prophets. He loved to describe things in curious figures and symbols, which, no doubt, made a great impression on the imagination of his fellow-captives.

It is likely enough that when the new lot of prisoners came from Judea, on the fall of Jerusalem, he met some of them. That was about ten years after his own removal. He could very well say to them: “I told you this would come; it is well and good that it should be so. No one loves Jerusalem more than I do; but Jahweh has told me that Israel must pass through trials, as through fire, before she can be mighty and victorious.”

Then Ezekiel goes on to cheer up the exiles. Probably the thousands of Jews who were carried away from their homes were scattered around in different places. Nebuchadnezzar was too wise to put them together: they might make mischief. So Ezekiel's words were copied and sent around to the other colonies.

#### III. THE SABBATH.

Of course the Jews were not allowed to build churches, so they made the Sabbath, or seventh day of the week, a link to connect

the old times with the new. On that day they could stop and remember Jahweh, and talk over their faith; but we do not know that the Jews tried to build any temple or synagogue. It would not have been right in their eyes, at that time; for the temple must be on holy ground. There was but one holy spot, Jerusalem.

#### IV. A HARD TASK.

Only a deep faith could have kept Ezekiel so cheerful and fearless. For his fellow-captives would say: "If Jahweh is so good and is our God, why do we suffer so much? All was smooth and safe when we worshipped other gods." Then it was the prophet's duty to justify all the things that had happened. "You were sick," he would answer. "Israel was sick, and knew it not; and the physician must heal the nation by unpleasant medicines."

He described a new government, full of happiness and virtue. It was to be called "God-is-here." The lesson text, "All souls are mine," is a good one for this lesson, because Ezekiel described a state in which every one was to be directly under the care of God. The church was to be the state. Every citizen should have a new heart and a new mind. A New Jerusalem was to arise, and the kingdom of God should be established.

Dreams of a coming kingdom in which all souls should obey God, and make Him King alone, have sprung up in all times. The Puritans had such a dream when they came to this new world out of the persecutions of the old world. But they did not make so much of the priesthood, temple, and forms. Ezekiel drew up a long list of things to be done by the priests, forms of sacrifice and worship. All this is not interesting to us; but what we admire is the faith the exile prophet had in the return of his captive people to Jerusalem, and their happiness afterward. He says in chapter xxxiv., "I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them; . . . he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd."

#### V. CLASS TALKS.

Who was Ezekiel? The son of a priest at Jerusalem. When was he taken from that city? About 596 B.C. Where did he go? To what did he turn? Did he have a home? Did he speak or write mostly? Did he become wholly a prophet? No. What do we mean by that? He dwelt a great deal on temple worship, and forms and sacrifices. What did he picture? A kingdom of God. Have others done this? Is his book a long one? Was he not very happy and hopeful? Whom did he specially denounce? The Moabites, Edomites, and other peoples who had gloried in Jerusalem's fall. On what did he rest his hope? Faith in Jahweh.

#### VI. LESSON TOPICS AND REVIEW.

- I. Ezekiel the Priest.
- II. Ezekiel the Prophet.
- III. His View of the Return.
- IV. His Idea of a Kingdom.
- V. The Sabbath in Exile.
- VI. Ethical Standard.
- VII. Herald of Isaiah of Babylon.

#### VII. SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS.

Ezekiel is one of the distinct prophets as to his personality. He drew from Jeremiah his chief note of warning, and added a joyful one of encouragement. See Cornill, chapter on "Ezekiel." Toy's summary is excellent.



## LESSON XI.

### STRANGERS IN A STRANGE LAND

LESSON TEXT.—“Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him.”—PSALM xlii.

(See Psalm cxxxvii.)

We sat down and wept by the waters  
Of Babel, and thought of the day  
When our foe, in the hue of his slaughters,  
Made Salem's high places his prey,  
And ye, O her desolate daughters,  
Were scattered all weeping away.

*Lord Byron.*

#### I. THE SCATTERING.

Jerusalem fell about 586 B.C., and Israel was scattered. Jeremiah said that Israel would be an exile seventy years, and then return to Jerusalem. Why he made the time seventy years we do not know. Probably the prophet meant by that number a long time, but not to be exact. Really, the Jews were exiles from their beloved Jerusalem not quite fifty years. What they did while away in foreign lands, and how it came about that they returned home, will be the subject of several lessons. We saw Jeremiah carried away by his countrymen to Egypt. Quite a colony of Jews went there, flying in terror, lest Nebuchadnezzar should visit his anger on them for the rebellion which sprang up some few years after Jerusalem was captured.

#### II. THE RUINS.

But the great number of Jews were driven by slow marches into the far-away country of Babylon. This was at different times, so that at last only a few remained in Judea. What a sad look the home-land of Israel had! There is a book in the Bible called Lamentations, and it tells us how Jerusalem looked, and how the people felt. “How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! how is she become a widow! she that was great among the nations!” “All our enemies have opened their mouths against us.” “They hiss and wag their heads, saying, Is this the city that men called the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth?”

Yet in the same book, so full of sorrow and tears, we find these words: “The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.” The faithful Jew never gave up. Here he was, at home, with ruins all about, the fields burned and torn, sickness everywhere, and bands of robbers in the country. Nothing happy or safe. Yet he hoped. Now let us turn to the Jew in Babylon, a stranger in a strange land; and we find him faithful and hopeful there.

#### III. BABYLON.

It was a long, horrid march, as we have said, from Jerusalem to the land of exile. On some of the Assyrian pictures we see how the Jews probably went, for they were treated like other prisoners of war,—in long lines, chained together, their arms bound back of them, and sometimes whipped when they grew tired and fell behind. Across a desert and over many a hard place they went before the end was reached.

But once in Babylon, which was more like a county than a

city, the poor Jews were better treated. After a while they took farms, or went to work at trades, or hired out in offices and families. They must have had many good times, and been fairly free. We read that King Jehoiachin, who was carried to Babylon with Ezekiel, became a favorite at the court, dined at the king's table, and when he died was buried with honors.

We learn from inscriptions what Nebuchadnezzar did to make Babylon magnificent. He created giant towers, immense walls, gorgeous palaces, fairy-like gardens, and built a grand system of water-works. Then he developed the commerce and agriculture and business of the whole kingdom. Indeed, he seemed to boast more of his deeds of peace than of war; and that makes us think he was a "great" ruler.

Now some of the Jews liked this, and made themselves contented, saying, "What a land of milk and honey this is! How beautiful, rich, and delightful!" But others, the most, drew into themselves, and frowned on the pleasures and attractions of what they called the wicked city. Captivity, instead of weakening the Jew's love of home and his worship of Jahweh, made Israel's zeal stronger, intenser, nobler. One of their prophets said, "May my right hand lose all its strength and skill, if I forget thee, Jerusalem."

#### IV. HELP AND WORK.

Two prophets did much to cheer the exiles. One was Ezekiel, whom we have described. The other was the unknown person now called the Isaiah of Babylon. Just what this latter leader did to keep the Jews faithful to their religion will be told in the next lesson.

There is no doubt that the Jews learned some things from the Babylonians which they afterwards put into the books of the Old Testament. But this we can see came true, as Jeremiah and others had prophesied: that the terrible fate which fell on Israel, of capture and exile, was a means of making the religion of Israel purer, stronger, nobler. There was a great deal of thinking and writing going on during the captivity. Good authorities say that Judges, Ruth, Samuel, and other books of the Old Testament were written during this period.

#### V. CLASS TALKS.

How many times were Jews carried away as prisoners to Babylon and the region about? How were they commonly treated on the march? What was the condition of Jerusalem and Judea? Did the Jews lose hope? On what did they rely? On the power of God to save. What two prophets cheered the exiles? Ezekiel and Isaiah of Babylon. Were the Jews treated as slaves? No. Were some well off? Who dined at the king's table? Did the Jews grow better or worse? Did they write much?

#### VI. LESSON TOPICS AND REVIEW.

- I. Jews in Egypt.
- II. March to Babylon.
- III. Glory of Babylon.
- IV. Condition of the Jews.
- V. Effect on Israel of the Captivity.
- VI. Books Written.
- VII. Final Victory of Deuteronomy and the Moses Party.

#### VII. SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS.

There is quite an opportunity in this lesson to show again the steadfastness of the Jews, and to prove that the Hebrew race illustrates to the world the growth of religion. Cornill is a light on this lesson, and so is Renan.

## LESSON XII.

### ISAIAH OF BABYLON.

LESSON TEXT.—“The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever.”—ISAIAH xl. 8.

Spread, oh, spread, thou mighty word,  
Spread the kingdom of the Lord,  
Wheresoe'er his breath has given  
Life to beings meant for heaven.

*Bahnmater.*

#### I. RIPENING.

It was 586 B.C. that Jerusalem fell and the Jews were carried prisoners into Babylonia. They were allowed to go home 537, and all the years between they were very busy. As we have seen in the preceding lessons, most of the exiles believed in a return to beloved Jerusalem. Boys became men, and middle-aged men died; but this hope never died. Now all this was laughed at by a few Jews and by nearly all of the Babylonian citizens: “What foolishness,” said they; “you will never go back to the land by the great sea (the Mediterranean). Give up such idle dreams and settle down. Make a better new home here, where money and comforts are.” But the Jews shook their heads, and went to their houses and read,—what do you suppose?

#### II. THEIR GREAT FRIEND.

Yes, in the safety of their families, the Jews took certain rolls, and read out loud from them passages like these: “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.” “Make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” “Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand.” “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd.”

In chapter xl. of Isaiah you will find these sentences and many more like them. They cheered the poor exiles and kept their courage up. Who wrote these great chapters in the Book of Isaiah, from xl. to the end, and two or three in the first part? We do not know. Perhaps more than one author. But in those captive days some one secretly wrote and sent out these grand, stirring prophecies; and afterward they were credited to Isaiah of Jerusalem, whose history we have studied. Of the two Isaiahs, this one who lived in Babylon is the greater. He shines like a giant beacon in the midst of storm and cloud, and all eyes turned toward him for encouragement.

He kept himself unknown because it was not safe for the Jews to talk much in public about going back to Jerusalem: the Babylonian rulers would have put this Isaiah in prison for rebellion and treason, had he come out openly.

#### III. CYRUS.

The great Nebuchadnezzar died, his son did not turn out to be worth much, and about 550 B.C., off toward the east, in Media, another great warrior began to do what Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar had done,—conquer and rule all about him. This mighty general was named Cyrus. Soon he defeated the foes near at hand, and finally his ambition rested on Babylon. He must conquer that proud city.

Not so easy, for there were the vast walls and the abundant food and weapons of war. Nabonedus was king of Babylon; and, fearing the attack of this Persian monarch, he had made great preparations for defence. The armies of Cyrus, excited by victory,

swept everything before them, and at last pitched their camps around the splendor of the capital. King Nabonedus ridiculed the fears of some of his nobles, and everything went on about the same in the streets. There were dinners, parties, business, and doings as usual, in the heart of the great city; but on the walls and around the suburbs was seen nothing but fighting, watching, and constant alarms.

For about two years this was kept up. Cyrus did not get in. It seemed about hopeless. Suddenly came the capture, and in a most curious way. The Euphrates River ran through the city, entering under the walls, and was regulated by an artificial lake and a canal outside. Cyrus put thousands of his soldiers at work on the lake, making it larger, and on the canal, too, so that he could stop the river for a little while by a dam. Then, when the bed of the river near the city wall was dry, he rushed other soldiers in through the archway where the water usually flowed.

The king and his court were feasting when messengers came crying: "The city is taken. Cyrus is here!"

It did not seem possible, and, so big was Babylon, many of the people did not know what had happened for some time afterward. Nabonedus surrendered, and so about 538 B.C. the powerful Chaldean kingdom fell into the hands of a Persian ruler.

#### IV. THE GREATER EVENT.

But, while the capture of Babylon seems to us the great thing, to the Jews there came something greater. They had heard of the rise and deeds of Cyrus, and looked to him as their deliverer. They were in a feverish state of mind. Anything that broke down the power of Babylon was so much hope of better things. Perhaps the Jews helped Cyrus in some way. We cannot surely tell. Anyway, it was about a year after the fall of Babylon when Cyrus gave the Jews permission to go home. Ah, what a time was that for the exiles! At last, after all these weary years, they were free to leave the land of the strangers and dwell once more in the country of their fathers!

#### V. CLASS TALKS.

What part of the Book of Isaiah did the author who lived in Babylon write? Is he known? Why did he keep concealed? Why is he called the loftiest of the prophets? What passage do you like the best of his writings? How long did Nebuchadnezzar reign? Forty-three years. How long did his son rule? Two years. Who was Cyrus? A small ruler in Media, under the Persian king. What first calls our attention to him? He revolted against his sovereign. How did he finally capture Babylon? What did he do afterward for the Jews? Was this expected? Who did a great deal to make the Jews hopeful? Isaiah of Babylon.

#### VI. LESSON TOPICS AND REVIEW.

- I. Isaiah of Babylon.
- II. Expectations of the Jews.
- III. Decline of Babylon.
- IV. Rise of Cyrus.
- V. Capture of Babylon.
- VI. Isaiah's Message,—Israel saved.
- VII. His Second Message,—Israel for the World.

#### VII. TO TEACHERS.

The consideration of Cyrus's manifesto to the Jews will fall in the next lesson. Dwell now upon Isaiah's marvellous words, and the remarkable events leading up to the return from captivity. Consult here the familiar sources: Stanley's "Jewish Church," Renan, Cornill.

## LESSON XIII.

### HOME TO THE OLD CITY.

LESSON TEXT.—“They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.”—PSALM cxxvi.

All as God wills, who wisely heeds  
To give or to withhold,  
And knoweth more of all my needs  
Than all my prayers have told!

*Whittier.*

#### I. THE PROCLAMATION.

It does not appear that Cyrus killed or destroyed very much after taking Babylon: he was too wise. His aim seemed to be one of keeping and using, not of cruelty and madly trampling on his victims. In this he was truly “great.” Something over a year after the Persian warrior entered Babylon, he issued an order that the Jews might return, such as wished, to Jerusalem. This may seem strange; but the reason given by good students of history is as follows: Cyrus feared Egypt, which had grown strong again. Now it would be well to have a friendly nation between, to guard against trouble. So by putting the Jews back in their old home, there was policy as well as humanity. In the Book of Ezra we find what Cyrus said and did in this matter, and a long list of emigrants.

#### II. PREPARING.

But we cannot feel sure of everything, as told in Ezra, because the Jews looked on Cyrus as a man sent of God to deliver the exiles: and some things are told of him which are not probable. We can rely on the substance, together with other sources for help. And this is the likely story:—

Cyrus ordered the sacred goblets and service, plundered from the temple at Jerusalem, to be gathered as far as possible, and handed over to the returning Jews. He further ordered those Jews who did not want to go home, to help those who did. He probably took some money from the Persian treasury, and gave it to the pilgrims. In the spring of 537 there was excitement all over Babylonia. The Jews were about to leave. Many houses would be closed, and familiar faces lost. Friendships had been made, marriages entered upon, business affairs created, all of which gave the event a sad look to many. Roots were to be torn up.

King Cyrus appointed a leader, Zerubbabel, which means “born in Babylon”: and before starting he was made governor of Judea. With Zerubbabel went certain advisers and priests. Can we make a picture of the scene just as the march began? Thousands of spectators came to see the doings, and the number of those returning was about fifty thousand. Tents were pitched all about. Persian cavalry, to escort the travellers, dashed over the ground. There was beating of brass cymbals, and strange singing. The rich, golden temple vessels were guarded by soldiers. People were crying, shouting, hurrying; at last there was no reason to wait longer, and the procession started. A hush came upon the vast crowd: the Jews were on the way! A song began from a priest, and was taken up by the others:—

“They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”

This they repeated over and over, having learned it from



Isaiah, to sing in captivity; and on and on the great multitude of men and women went, out from Babylonia, so fair and strong, into the desert, still singing, till their voices were lost in the distance, "Make in the desert a highway for our God."

### III. HOME AT LAST.

The journey was long and hard; many died; great hardships overtook the tender child and the feeble adult; after several months the end was reached. But what a sight met the eyes of the Jews! Was this beautiful Judea, the once lovely land of their prophets and kings? Farms run down, towns inhabited by strangers, Jerusalem a ruin!

### IV. ALTAR AND TEMPLE.

About the first thing done, on settling at Jerusalem and in the country near, was the building of an altar. The sacrifice to Jahweh was begun at once. Not only was this act one which the pious Jews believed in, but they found heathen tribes and enemies about, and it was necessary to teach them an early lesson. The altar was placed on the spot where the old one, of King Solomon, stood.

Everybody was busy, trying to get a living and to make homes, so that nothing was done for several years toward a new temple. Now, Jerusalem without a temple seemed to the priests and leaders a shocking state of things. It is true that men steadily worked in the ruins of the old temple, clearing the ground; but this did not satisfy the leaders.

About sixteen years after the return, 520 B.C., a famine rose in the land. Haggai and Zechariah, prophets, went about telling the Jews that Jahweh was punishing them for not building the temple. This frightened them, and they said there should be no more delay. We are told that Haggai was a very aged man, that he had seen the old temple and the old Jerusalem. We can believe that he spoke with fire. His words burned into the people's consciences, and they worked so hard and so fast that in four years and a half a new temple stood where before lay scattered stones and timbers. This was the second one, quite poor and simple, though large, compared to Solomon's, the first; but it served the Jews well. The Samaritans offered to help; but the proud Jerusalem Jews would not accept aid from Samaritan Jews who had married with foreigners, or from others living in Samaria, not of pure Israelitish stock. The Samaritans tried afterward to hinder the work, but in vain.

### V. CLASS TALKS.

Who led the Jews home? What did Cyrus do for them? How many returned? What was built first? Who rebuked the Jews? Haggai. For what? When was the new temple finished? 515 B.C.

### VI. LESSON TOPICS AND REVIEW.

- I. The Proclamation.
- II. Policy of Cyrus.
- III. Character of Cyrus.
- IV. Zerubbabel.
- V. Home at Last.
- VI. Altar.
- VII. Temple Building.

### VII TO TEACHERS.

The "Bible for Learners" is specially helpful on this lesson.

## LESSON XIV.

### EZRA THE SCRIBE.

LESSON TEXT.—“The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.”—PSALM xix.

Oh, where are kings and empires now  
Of old that went and came ?  
But holy Church is praying yet,  
A thousand years the same.

*A. C. Cox.*

#### I. LEFT BEHIND.

We are now to study the life of a great character who appeared at Jerusalem in 458 B.C.,—that is, fifty-seven years after the dedication of the new temple, which we read about in our last lesson. Where did he come from, who was he, and why are we concerned about him ?

Ezra the scribe was living in Babylon, and belonged to a school of men who studied the laws of Israel, knew history, and were making up the books that afterward found a place in the Bible. He was “a skilful writer of the law of Moses.” Ezra’s great aim was to keep Israel in the right path. And he understood by that, obedience to the regular, strict rules of the Jewish religion, as laid down in olden times. During the years since Zerubbabel left, those remaining in Babylon had worked hard to put these commands of Moses into good shape.

#### II. ANOTHER EXPEDITION.

Now Ezra heard from those who visited Jerusalem and came back that matters were not all right. He was told that the people were down-hearted and had fallen away from the faith. This roused him, and he resolved to do something. So he asked permission of the Persian king to lead a band to Judea, as Zerubbabel had so long before.

Cyrus was long dead. His successor, Darius I., was gone, and Xerxes I. The reigning monarch, Artaxerxes, gave consent very willingly, and Ezra prepared to start. The company was nothing so large as the one before, but Ezra was pleased with the answer to his call, with one exception. There were not enough priests at the first rally, so he sent off a messenger to plead for their coming ; and he not only got more priests, but a large number of temple servants. Ezra was thinking most of all of the religious side of the affair. Therefore he called a fast before the start. All joined in praying Jahweh to bless the expedition. No escort of cavalry went with this pilgrim troop.

#### III. AT JERUSALEM.

After five months of slow, painful travel, the hills of the Holy City came in sight. Then the pilgrims broke out into a chorus of thanksgiving, and praised the Lord for his goodness in preserving their lives. The priests hailed Ezra with delight, the Jews who belonged to the Moses party were full of joy. “Now,” said they, “the glory of Zion will shine, the heathen be confounded, and our weakness be made strength.” But many others did not feel so joyous. Why was there this division ? Because Ezra was known to be a stern believer in the old laws, and not all agreed with him. These feared that he would do something so hard and severe as to bring sorrow and trouble into their homes. Ezra was honest, he was earnest, but he was stern.

And so it turned out. Ezra was soon told that many of the Jews had taken wives from other families than those of their own nation. Indeed, we remember David did, and Solomon; but Ezra knew the law of Moses, and believed in it, so he was terribly disturbed. It seems strange that he had not heard before of this fact, which must have been known to everybody else.

#### IV. THE WINNOWING.

Ezra fasted, he fell as in a faint, he tore off his garments, he sat in horror, he prayed in agony that God would not punish his people for such an awful sin. A crowd gathered in and around the temple, the city was stirred, one repeated to another the solemn news, and then and there began a bitter state of things.

The Jews who were not guilty shouted, and the women sobbed. The Jews who were guilty hurried away to escape rough handling. Finally it was agreed that a meeting should be held to find out who were guilty, and those proven so should put their wives away, — that is, send them off as outcasts. An order was sent forth commanding all heads of households to report in three days, under penalty of losing property if not obedient. The crowd gathered in a great rain, and the examination was put into a committee's hands.

Afterward the offenders were picked out, and for two months this court or committee investigated. Ezra was chief judge and spared no one. As a result, many Jews sent away their wives and sometimes their children, never more to see them. One priest would not submit: he went to Samaria years later and persuaded the people to build a temple on Mount Gerizim. No doubt, others said they would, but did not.

For thirteen years after this we do not hear much of Ezra. Perhaps his enforcing of the law made an opposition which hurt his usefulness. He thought he was right, and keeping Israel free from harm. We shall see him again, joined with Nehemiah, doing great things for the glory of Jahweh and Jerusalem.

#### V. CLASS TALKS.

What were many Jews doing in Babylon? Studying and writing. In what? The laws of Moses. Was any of this done at Jerusalem the same time? No. Why? Because the Jerusalem Jews were busy in getting homes and rebuilding the waste places. Who was Ezra? To what king did he go for permission to lead an expedition? How long did the journey take? What year did he arrive in Jerusalem? 458 B.C. Why did he go there? What was one of the first things he did? Why was the first meeting adjourned? Because of the rain and the crowd. Was Ezra's wish carried out?

#### VI. LESSON TOPICS AND REVIEW.

- I. Literary Work at Babylon.
- II. Scribes.
- III. Ezra.
- IV. Cause for his Going to Jerusalem.
- V. The Expedition.
- VI. His Horror over Offenders.
- VII. His Honest Aim.

#### VII. TO TEACHERS.

Confine the lesson to the personality of Ezra and first events of his career. In succeeding lessons, "Beginning of the Bible," and "Captives' Dreams fulfilled," we are to consider Ezra and Nehemiah completely.

## LESSON XV. CAPTIVES' DREAMS FULFILLED.

LESSON TEXT.—“I will show thee my faith by my works.”—JAMES ii. 18.

(See Book of Nehemiah.)

And throned on her hills sits Jerusalem yet,  
But with dust on her forehead, and chains on her feet;  
For the crown of her pride to the mocker hath gone,  
And the holy Shechinah is dark where it shone.

*Whittier.*

### I. WAITING.

Ezra made a start, as we saw in our last lesson, toward something better. But everything held back; year after year went by, and nothing new appeared. There were quarrels, and trials in every direction. Sometimes Ezra would go out and try to mend matters; he rebuked, and, we must confess, often scolded, for it seemed a shame in his sight that the people should be so careless and selfish. Ezra was strict and stern; the people, for the most part, wanted to be let alone. They found it a hard task to live, to keep their families together; why should the priests be so hard on them? Some thirteen years passed in this way, and then came a sudden change.

### II. THE LEADER.

Off in Babylon, all this time, lived a Jew who was very anxious to get news from Ezra and Jerusalem. He never lost a chance to meet those who came from that region, and he talked over the affairs going so badly. One day his brother arrived, and told Nehemiah (the name of the Jew) that everything had a discouraged look at Jerusalem. Something ought to be done. This made Nehemiah's heart sadder than ever. He said to himself: “After all that was done by King Cyrus, must we lose Jerusalem and the temple? Is there no one to lead the people, build the walls of the old city, and make the temple glorious?” He wept, and prayed.

Now Nehemiah was cup-bearer to the Persian king at Babylon, a position of honor. It was his duty to pour out the wine at feasts, and, after tasting it, to show it was not poisoned, pass the goblet to the king. He was much liked by his royal master, and treated in a friendly manner. Soon after hearing the bad news about his countrymen, Nehemiah, at a banquet, wore such a sad face that the king noticed it, and asked his favorite servant what the trouble might be. Then Nehemiah spoke out, and moved the king so much by his tears and grief that he and the queen gave their favorite cup-bearer permission to go to Jerusalem. Nehemiah was a happy man, you may be sure; and right soon he started across the desert and over the long way, to meet Ezra and to plan for making Jerusalem strong and happy.

### III. A BOLD WORK.

It was 445 B.C. that Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem. Ezra hailed him, took new courage, and no time was lost in getting to work. The first call was to have the walls rebuilt around the city, and no one knew that Nehemiah had this in mind. After a few days he went out by night, followed by a few friends, and rode around the boundaries of the city. Ah, what a desolation! Stones, bricks, and beams in confusion. Nehemiah's heart was

started more than ever. He called certain ones together the next day and stood out against the wretched state of things. "It is a reproach," "We must erect walls, and give dignity and strength to our city." (Oh, no, it was impossible, said many. "It can be and shall be done," said the new leader. After this there was no discussion, the walls went up.

#### IV. OBSTRUCTIONS.

Not, however, without great dangers. Enemies in neighboring towns tried to stop the work. There was jealousy on the part of some, for fear Jerusalem might be too proud and powerful. A man in office of another province, Sanballat by name, with two others, Tobiah and Geshem, tried hard to stop Nehemiah's work; letters with mean hints in them, and even raised forces to fight; but they failed. Finally, pretending to want a friendly meeting, he was asked to go to a spot outside the city. Nehemiah saw the plot and answered, "I am engaged in a great work and cannot leave home." A good motto in life-work for any one. So for a long time, working day and night with arms at their side to repel the foe, and Nehemiah ready with trumpet to blow an alarm in case of attack, the building of the walls went on to the finish. Then there was a great celebration, with many religious ceremonies.

The Persian king, Artaxerxes, had made Nehemiah governor of Judah. But when offered such a high post he had been anxious for modesty. It was Nehemiah's custom to wear a crown, and build the temple's gateway. But something more was desired, and a new Ezra came from Persia. The walls returned, now more fortified than before. He must have the law revised and reorganized. It was done. Ezra stood ready to give the Mosaic law to the people as they petitioned for it. He was the second Moses. He must then organize the law, the people, and the temple. He must do the same things which he had prepared. These laws were supposed to be from Moses; and Ezra thought as Nehemiah did, that the Jews were not sure of their laws, and that the law was being changed again and again, and that as punishment. For this reason Ezra was called the "second Moses."

After several years of rule as governor Nehemiah revisited the Persian court. How long he remained we do not know, but long enough for his enemies to make trouble in his absence. On returning to Jerusalem he found Tobiah in the temple, and some "heathenish" fellows creeping about. There was a great deal of reform still to do, and he did it. We do not know just how and where Ezra and Nehemiah ended their lives.

#### V. CLASS TALK.

What had the pupils been dreaming about? Who was Nehemiah? What a wonderful "doer" he was! How did he bring about the "wall of Jerusalem"? How many "obstacles"? How "overcame" did he have? Some caution. Were the walls of Jerusalem entirely destroyed? No. What tried to stop the rebuilding? How was he won against this? What fine thing did Nehemiah say to his enemies? What did Ezra do?

#### VI. LESSON TOPICS AND REVIEW.

- I. Ezra's Mission.
- II. Nehemiah's Position.
- III. His Town by Night.
- IV. Account of the Work.
- V. Reasons for Opposition.
- VI. Ezra's Reading of the Law.
- VII. The Power of Leadership.

#### VII. TO TEACHERS.

Lesson chapter, "Revised Church," picture story, gives a colored picture of this event. Do not fail to bring out the heart of these two courageous characters. Robert Collier has a suggestive sermon on the text. "And Nehemiah said it." And Nehemiah said it.



## LESSON XVI.

### BEGINNING THE BIBLE.

LESSON TEXT.—“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet.”—PSALM CXIX. 105.

Out from the heart of nature rolled  
The burdens of the world-wide  
The glances of nature's smile  
Like the voluptuous tongue of flame,  
Up from the burning world below,  
The candles of love and hope

*Ralph Waldo Emerson.*

#### I. THE SEEDS.

Everything grows, even the Bible grew. We must learn this fact well, and remember it: and then there will not be so many mistakes in understanding what the Bible means. Some people think that, because we speak of the Old and New Testaments in this way, there is one so much better shown in the Scriptures; this is wrong. We pay more respect to the Bible when we try hard to learn how it came to be, and what it really means. There were seeds of writings, and things reported from Moses to Moses for a long time among the Jews—fragments of laws, and songs, and histories, but nothing put in shape. We find that Ezra was the first one who made a Book.

#### II. THE FIVE BOOKS.

Nehemiah was a statesman, Ezra was a scribe. Nehemiah and Ezra worked together, as we have seen; and it is quite likely that the scribe did most of the literary work, while the governor suggested, and supported the preparation of the written religion. For in the time when the walls were rebuilt at Jerusalem (444 B.C.) the Jews began to be a “people of the book,” as we say, or “work-shippers under the law.” What does that mean? It means that then the Bible, as we know it, began, and Ezra copied the five books that are at the opening of our Old Testament.—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. This collection is called the Pentateuch. Just how much was in the compilation which Ezra made we do not know; but he got together the records and laws, in form something like the present, and they were called the writings of Moses, for these books seemed to be what Moses would have declared as law, had he been living.

It was a great work. Much of the matter related to forms and rules and facts that applied to the Jews in their early days, and does not interest us. But we must put ourselves in the places of these people, and think of the whole affair. What a grand deed it seemed to the pious Jews who believed, as Ezra did, that the only true religion in the world was the faith of Judaism, and that to know his law and keep it was reflecting happiness. To have this law in writing, and so hear it read, and to repeat it,—why, what were better?

#### III. SOME CLOUDS.

Not everything was clear sky. Some Jews did not like Ezra's hard-and-fast way of telling them what Moses commanded. These Jews, of rather free minds, thought many of the requirements were hard and cruel and needless. So that when Ezra proclaimed the law, telling the people how everything should be done, at such a

time, in such a way, no matter at what cost, there was not a little complaint. But the greater part of the people fell in with the new movement, and Nehemiah made it very uncomfortable for those who felt like rebelling.

Beside the five books were some psalms and prophecies, and a few writings like Ruth, Judges, Kings, and others, which were in use; but we are now interested in just one fact,— that the Jews began to get their religious works into some clear shape, for regular use, about this time, though as yet there was no "canon," or "Bible." Canon means an accepted list of books endorsed as authoritative. Ezra began the "canon," or the books that rule, but only so far as the Pentateuch. He edited; and the great gathering of priests and people in October, 444 B.C., approved what he had done.

## IV. RESULTS.

The getting together of all the books in our Bible took many centuries; and, finally, certain wise men of the church said that some books were "canonical" and some were not. The Roman Catholic church includes some writings in its Bible which the Protestant church throws out. The Jews do not recognize the New Testament as Scriptures. So you see how, as we said, the Bible grew, in many senses.

But to return to Ezra and his times. Those who agreed with him were happy. They had some books. They could always turn to their scrolls and read what the Lord demanded. They did not depend on prophets who spoke as they were moved. They had more temple observances, more religion, so they claimed, more zeal. It was easier to tell who were heretics, and easier to pray and please God. Very soon the priesthood grew stronger and larger. Very soon the sacrifices were costlier, prayers longer, and the old glory of the Jewish worship seemed to shine once more.

## V. CLASS TALKS.

Did the Bible grow? What do we mean by that? It was not made at once. Does this take away any of its value? No. What were the first forms? Oral reports and fragments of writings. What did Ezra the scribe do? To whom did he refer the books as author? Moses. Why? Because much in them were similar to the Mosaic laws. What does "canon" mean? Who has decided what shall go into the Bible? Do the Jews acknowledge the New Testament as Scriptures?

## VI. LESSON TOPICS AND REVIEW.

- I. Early Scriptures.
- II. Pentateuch.
- III. Canon.
- IV. Ezra's Probable Work.
- V. Difference between Prophet and Priest.
- VI. The Law.
- VII. Good and Evil of Ezra's Influence.

## VII. TO TEACHERS.

Knappert, "Religion of Israel," chapter xvii., treats Ezra and his times interestingly. See also Cornill. There is room here for a clear or a cloudy teaching on the validity of the Bible, its origin and claims. Pupils will naturally ask questions as to other parts than the Pentateuch. Leave a reverent but free impression. Truth does not suffer by daylight. For extended treatment consult Chadwick's "The Bible of To-day," Amos K. Fiske's "The Jewish Scriptures," and Sunderland's "The Bible."

## LESSON XVII.

### A PATRIOT HERO.

LESSON TEXT.—“In God have I put my trust, I will not be afraid.”—PSALM lvi. 11.

(See Book of Maccabees, in Apochrypha.)

Thou biddest, Lord, thy sons be bold;  
Lord, thou hast set us free;  
The dear adoption fast we hold,  
The glorious liberty.

*T. H. Gull.*

#### I. QUIET.

About a century passed by, after the active times of Ezra and Nehemiah, in which we get no tidings. What was going on those hundred years? Perhaps new books were written. The old towns grew larger, the state religion branched out in greater splendor, and the people made money. Anyway, no sure records exist; and we can only say that under the Persian rule Israel continued to prosper. But B.C. 332 down came Alexander the Great, who conquered Judea; and then the Jews were governed by the Greeks. After that, a long time, B.C. 205, came another change of rulers, when the Syrian-Greek king conquered poor Israel and became master. Thus the little Jewish kingdom passed from one to another in the hands of battle.

#### II. PERSECUTION.

At last we find something in the Story of Israel, after so long a time of silence, that stirs our blood. About 168 B.C. one of the Syrian kings, Antiochus Epiphanes, grew angry with the Jews, and resolved to bring them low. He intended to crush their proud, national spirit; and so he aimed his attacks at their religion. Troops were sent to Jerusalem, where they plundered the temple and offered up swine on the altar as a sacrifice (the greatest desecration possible in a Jew's eyes), burned the scriptures, and put to death many of the sacred priesthood. Idols were set up in the holy places, the reading of the law forbidden, and every shame possible put upon the Jewish religion.

Antiochus ordered his officers to carry out this policy everywhere. He found a fierce resistance outside Jerusalem, at a little town called Modein. Here lived Mattathias, an aged high priest. When the insolent Syrian officer appeared and demanded heathen sacrifice, the old man struck the invader down, called to arms, and rallied the inhabitants. The brutal soldiers fled for the time, but soon returned. Mattathias sought refuge in the wild country, and drew around him a noble band of patriots. He had several sons, one of whom was named Judas Maccabæus (the Hammer). Rightly named, for he gave blow on blow, so heavy they broke the tyrant's power.

#### III. THE STRUGGLE.

The father died, telling Judas to be the general, and Simon, another son, to act as statesman in carrying on the war for home and temple. The story of the following years is exciting. Maddened by this resistance, King Antiochus commanded his general, Lysias, to go with a great army, subdue the Jews, destroy Jerusalem, and make slaves of the people. So, with many elephants, 40,000 regular foot soldiers, 7,000 horsemen, and a large number of

volunteers, Lysias marched toward Judea. But Judas was too much for his foe, and with a greatly smaller force scattered the invaders, and secured much gold and silver. Then there was joy and song in Israel's towns. The next year Lysias tried again with 65,000 soldiers, and the Hammer broke his army to pieces with only 10,000 men. Once more the foreign foe sought to conquer, bringing a terrible host of 100,000 foot soldiers, 20,000 horse, and 32 huge elephants covered with steel plates and carrying archers. This was too vast for Judas, and he retreated into Jerusalem. Fortunately the attacking forces began to have quarrels, and so the result was all right; for peace was offered to the Jews, and liberty granted to worship their own way. The patriotism and heroism of Judas Maccabæus stand out in blazing glory on the pages of history.

#### IV. VICTORY FROM DEFEAT.

The Hammer struck here and there afterward, making the enemies of Israel tremble, for peace did not last; but on one battlefield, where Judas was met by twenty to one, this hero died. Not in vain his noble life, though it fell at last beneath the oppressor's rage; for Judea was allowed independence, and for a time her own people ruled the land. Rome was beginning to be felt as a power. The Maccabee family had secretly sent messengers to the capital, to make friends with the Roman nation. Gradually the help of this new ally came to be recognized. So there flourished, for over fifty years, what was called the Hasmonean priest-princes, a native Judean set of kings. This was the last time the Jews had independence. Quarrels arose, and finally the Roman ruler Pompey stepped in and put another kind of governor at the head (64 B.C.). From this time on, till Jerusalem was burned and sacked, and her people scattered over the earth (70 A.D.), we shall see Roman rule and ruin.

#### V. CLASS TALKS.

Do we hear much about the Jews after Ezra, for two or three hundred years? No. What was going on, do you suppose? Who first strikes our attention? What was he trying to do? Where did Antiochus meet his first repulse? At Modin. Who lived there? What was he? A high priest. How did he show his feelings? Did he fly? Which one of his sons took his place? What do you think of Judas Maccabæus? Is he like any of our American heroes? How many times did he defeat his enemies? What did they call him? The Hammer. Did peace and independence follow his death? Yes.

#### VI. LESSON TOPICS AND REVIEW.

- I. Antiochus Epiphanes.
- II. Mattathias.
- III. Judas and Simon.
- IV. Heroism and Patriotism.
- V. The Maccabean Rule.
- VI. Jewish Independence and its End.
- VII. Appearance of Roman Power.

#### VII. TO TEACHERS.

In "The Story of the Jews," by Prof. J. K. Hosmer, chapter v., is a picturesque description of Judas Maccabæus, the Hebrew William Tell. He is a grand character, worthy of careful study, and ought to prove an inspiration to patriotism and love of liberty. See also Renan, "People of Israel," Book VIII. chap. xv. and xvi.

## LESSON XVIII.

### HEROD, THE TEMPLE BUILDER.

LESSON TEXT.—“Ye are the temple of the living God.”—2 COR. vi. 16.

Where'er ascends the sacrifice  
Of fervent praise and prayer,  
Or on the earth, or in the skies,  
The God of heaven is there.

*Drennan.*

#### I. ANOTHER RULE.

Two brothers of the native Judean rulers quarrelled, and went so far that it was necessary to call in the Roman authorities who had been friendly, to settle the disputes. So by degrees, after 64 B.C., when Pompey took part, the Roman rule became settled. In 47 B.C. Julius Cæsar made Antipater a ruler of Judea, and also set up Herod, Antipater's son, as governor of Galilee. This was the Herod of whom we are to know more in this lesson. He has been called “Great,” but that can be only because of his wickedness, which certainly was great. He reached the position of king, after his father was poisoned, about 37 B.C., through some hard fighting.

#### II. HEROD'S AMBITION.

This man died 4 B.C., and during the thirty-three years of his reign we see a mixed mass of cruelty, jealousy, and deceit. There is hardly anything good to be said of him. His ambition was all for himself and his pleasures. At times he seemed insane, suspecting his best friends and killing his nearest relatives. When he captured Jerusalem, at the beginning of his government, he ordered the judges and high priests to be slain. Called to Rome several times to give account of crimes, he made everything appear all right, and lied so handsomely that his superiors at court were deceived.

To please the people he built theatres and aqueducts, and made gardens. He introduced Greek and Roman games, with music and many sports. But the Jews did not care for these things. Taxes were growing heavier, religion was neglected, while human life did not stand safe. Herod married a beautiful woman, Mariamne, a descendant of the Maccabees. He treated her shamefully, and at last allowed her to be executed. Then he burst out in remorse, and tried to drown his vile deed in pleasure. In order to please the Jews and be more popular, this bad man decided to build a new temple. He knew how Israel loved the temple, and by this stroke he thought to win his subjects to love and loyalty.

#### III. THE NEW TEMPLE.

Over nine years were spent in the work, and then the structure was not finished. There is a tradition among the Jews to this effect, that Herod, in one of his repenting states, went to a Rabbi, or learned Jew, and asked him what he should do to stop the awful pangs of remorse that burned in his conscience. The Rabbi answered, “As thou hast put out the light in thy own soul by disobeying the laws of God, do something for the light of the world by restoring the temple; for the temple is the light of all.”

Herod did his best to carry out this idea. He had many obstacles. The Jews mistrusted him, and so he kept away from the



sacred walls. Worship went on without interruption. Everything was done in a way suited to the strict notions of the Jews. A thousand priests, who did much of the masonry and carpenter work, were dressed in the clothes of their office while at their work. Thousands of skilful mechanics were under their orders. It was dedicated with great pomp. Herod, we are told, sacrificed three hundred oxen himself. There were porches, courts, treasuries, gateways, all of splendor. This was the temple which Jesus visited, and which, looking at from the Mount of Olives, he predicted would not have one stone left on another. The sanctuary, or inner holy place, was at the centre, covered, as Josephus tells us, "with plates of gold of great weight, which shone in the light of the morning sun with fiery splendor, so that one could not look at it. Where it was not gilt, it was exceeding white, and appeared like a mountain of snow to distant travellers approaching Jerusalem." The people were accustomed to say, "He who has not seen the temple of Herod has never seen a beautiful building."

#### IV. WHAT DID IT ALL MEAN?

A visitor looking at that vast, dazzling, costly structure would have said, not knowing the facts: "What new life and power have come to Israel! Lo, her worship is growing wider and stronger, and her king is her great friend." But this was not so. Jesus saw through all the make-believe, and he knew how little the magnificent temple meant. So did Herod himself. For a time, though, the priesthood flourished more, and Jerusalem was happy. In her borders discontent was growing. Great clouds were rolling up. The life of Israel as a nation was passing away. No gorgeous temple could bring it back. But the majesty and richness of this work of Herod's live in poetry and history. He died a wreck, the victim of troubles in mind and body.

#### V. CLASS TALKS.

What was the last rule over Judea? Syrian-Greek. What do we have now? Roman. Why was the change made? Who was the first ruler in the new order? Antipater. When did his son take his place? Was Herod a good man in any way? Possibly in this, that he seemed to repent sometimes of his evil deeds. What did he do to please the people at large? Did the Jews like him? What, at last, did he undertake, to satisfy the Jews? How long was the temple building? Was this the one to which Jesus often went? Can you find a picture of it anywhere? How did Herod finally end his life?

#### VI. LESSON TOPICS AND REVIEW.

- I. Roman Dealings with Israel.
- II. How Herod came to Rule.
- III. His Character.
- IV. His Public Work.
- V. His Domestic Life.
- VI. The New Temple.
- VII. Drawing near to the Christian Era.

#### VII. TO TEACHERS.

The Encyclopædia Britannica has a valuable article on Herod. Stanley's "Jewish Church" contains a long account of the temple. Of course, Josephus is the great resource for those who wish full reading on this and the following lesson. Stapfer, "Palestine in Time of Christ," gives elaborate diagrams and details of the temple.

## LESSON XIX.

### THE TIME OF JESUS.

LESSON TEXT.—“The fulness of the time.”—GAL. iv. 4.

Thy living word sprang from the heart of Man,  
Eternal word of love and liberty;  
Fearless thou gav'st it to the winds again;  
'Twas Manhood's native tongue and could not die.

*Samuel Johnson.*

#### I. AFTER HEROD.

Herod left a will, by which his three sons were to divide up his kingdom. But it needed the sanction of the Roman emperor in order to have it carried out. While Augustus was trying to decide, an appeal was sent by the Jews, asking that they might have a king of their own. This request was denied, and the will was allowed. So the country over which there had been one ruler was handed over to three, which made matters still worse. In addition, there were quarrels and bitterness among the Jews themselves, resulting in warfares and weakness. The Pharisees, who held to the old faith, disliked the Sadducees, who were more liberal; and the Zealots were firebrands because they were bound to fight for country and independence.

#### II. A GREAT MIXTURE.

That is what we must call Palestine at the time of Jesus. As we have followed the stream of Israel's history, we can see how this would be so. The land of the Jews was common ground for battles, caravans, and expeditions. Into it had poured the representatives of all nations. Herod had drawn thousands of foreigners. A fever restlessness was abroad. A looking for something strange and wonderful was on the people's faces. Where would it break out and how? The Jews still believed in their destiny, and looked for a great place among the nations. Jesus was born, preached, taught, and was crucified. Some years after, the frightful siege of Jerusalem took place, when Titus, in 70 A.D., utterly destroyed the historic city. Then hope burned low in Israel's breast, but it burned; and it has not gone out yet.

But at the time of the birth of Jesus and during his life-work the Jews were asking for a Messiah, a Deliverer.

#### III. ALL AROUND.

Many Jews, during the long, eventful history we have studied, had gone away from Palestine. They could be found in Egypt, Asia Minor, Greece, even at Rome. They did a great deal to get the books of the Old Testament in shape. They did not forget the religion of Jahweh, and had influence on other religions. They sent support to the old home.

But Jerusalem was the centre of the religious life of the Jews. There were great teachers, great schools, in which the law and the commentary were taught. Hillel was a famous scholar. He was president of the Sanhedrin, the great Jewish court, for about forty years, or until 9 A.D. “As patient as Hillel” and “As modest as Hillel” were proverbs. This is reported of him. One day a knock was heard at his door, and on opening it Hillel found a lad, not Jewish, who mockingly said, “Teach me the law in the time in which I can stand on one foot.” It seems that the boy had

tried this on Shammai, another learned man, a Teacher. Shammai did not take the question kindly, and drove the intruder off. But Hillel never omitted any opportunity of doing good. He thought this one. So he replied good-naturedly: "Certainly I will: Do not unto another what you would not that another should do unto you. This is the whole of the law, the rest is commentary." We are not told how much impressed the boy was. One of Hillel's sayings long remembered was: "They wash the statues, and cleanse and beautify the temple. How much more attention ought we to give to the temple of the soul!" So we see that some things were going on in Palestine beside war and plots and building of splendid houses.

#### IV. NOT THE END.

History is a growth, like all things, as we have said. These lessons on the Story of Israel do not finish the tale of Jewish life and religion. Christianity came out of the Jews; and we have seen how, from the early small seeds, the trees and harvests sprung. The way to understand the life and teachings of Jesus is to begin by understanding the times of Jesus and what went before. Then we can read with clear eyes the gospel of Matthew. The Story of Israel helps us correctly to know the Story of Jesus, the great Prophet and Teacher. We see where he differed, where he agreed, what he meant, to whom he spoke, why he suffered, and how he fulfilled.

#### V. CLASS TALKS.

When did Herod die? What did he say in his will? Who decided the case? The Roman emperor. What did the Jews ask for? A ruler of their own. How did it come out? The three sons of Herod divided the kingdom. Were there many parties in Judea at the time of Jesus? Yes. Can you name some? For what were the Jews looking? A Messiah. What does that mean? Were there some learned teachers then? Which one is mentioned in the lesson? What did he tell a boy who asked a queer question?

#### VI. LESSON TOPICS AND REVIEW.

- I. Passing of Herod.
- II. Division of Government.
- III. Description of the Schools.
- IV. State of Things in Jerusalem.
- V. Jesus in Line with the Prophets.
- VI. "Fulness of Time."
- VII. The Jewish View of this Era.

#### VII. TO TEACHERS.

There was a preparation for the Christian era in the Roman rule over the world, in the liberalizing of the Jewish life, in the mixture of Greek influence with the Hebrew thought. There is a charm found in studying the times of Jesus in the light of the Story of Israel, as we unravel references and understand allusions in the New Testament. Life and reality come back to the sayings and acts of the disciples. Stapfer, Carpenter, Hausrath, and others are helpful in this direction. For those who wish to devote considerable study to this interesting lesson, we suggest the reading of Schürer's "A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ."

## LESSON XX.

### REVIEW.

#### A LONG JOURNEY.

We have travelled a long distance in the nineteen lessons now finished. How many have kept on and been interested? We have seen wars, kings, temples, cities, deserts, and many exciting events. Did they not seem real, though so many centuries ago? Just the same kind of men and women, too, we know, in many ways; but their life was different. Now we come to the end of our journey, and must stop to think what it all means.

#### ONE OBJECT.

After all, we can find one object ahead of the whole line of events. We can see the Jews zealous for their nation and religion all the time, never letting go their faith, and believing that God would bring them out victorious at last. There is no other people we read of with such a religious zeal. They are the ones from whom Jesus sprang. We have learned how brave, how true, how hopeful they were. Let us go over the ground again.

#### DIVISION.

We began our lessons after David and Solomon, when the one kingdom was split into two, and studied Amos and Hosea, two grand prophets. But the northern kingdom, after lasting about two hundred and forty years, was destroyed by the Assyrians, the "terror from the north." The Jews were mostly carried away prisoners, and from that we have the story of "The Ten Lost Tribes." But the southern kingdom, with the capital at Jerusalem, lived on. And a prophet, Isaiah of Jerusalem, said such encouraging things the king and people did not fear. The Assyrians approached at one time with a great army, when a plague smote them, right before Jerusalem's walls; and so the Jews escaped.

About 622 B.C. a boy king, Josiah, grew up and started a new order of things.

#### REFORMATION.

A book was discovered, giving the law of Moses. It was read to Josiah. He resolved to put it in force, and ordered its rules carried out. Idols were destroyed, offenders were punished, and sacrifices held only at Jerusalem. This king tried to uphold the worship of Jahweh against all other gods. After a while a prophet appeared, Jeremiah, who spoke out plainly and warned his countrymen of coming danger. He said "woe, woe," very often. Sure enough, the Chaldeans, under Nebuchadnezzar, fell on Jerusalem with a mighty army, and took the city.

#### EXILE.

Then followed a hard, long exile; for the Jews were taken away, across deserts, to a foreign land. In and around Babylon they were kept for nearly fifty years. Ezekiel cheered them, and Isaiah of Babylon comforted their sad hearts. Never did the captives lose hope of returning.

## THE RETURN.

The hope came true about 537 B.C. A Persian general, Cyrus, conquered Babylonia, and immediately told the Jews to go home. They started gladly for Jerusalem. But the march was trying; and, when the dear old city was reached, lo, there appeared little but ruins. But Ezra went from Babylon afterward, and stirred the people to work. He and Nehemiah roused the Jews to rebuild the walls and to adopt new laws. This was a great, joyous time for Israel. Every loyal Jew believed that old prophecies were coming true: each enemy was to be put down, and Jerusalem should shine over the world in glory.

## SECOND TEMPLE.

A new temple was built on the ground of the old one. At the finish an imposing ceremony took place. At this time, too, began the Bible; that is, the writings then scattered were put together, and some additions made. The psalms, or songs of the temple, were made up into a book. In this way the Jews felt stronger and of more importance. The Persians were, on the whole, friendly to the Jews.

## INDEPENDENCE.

All this peaceful life at Jerusalem lasted two or three hundred years, when trouble broke out again. The Greek rulers who had taken the place of the Persian, were not so kind; and a Jewish family, called Maccabees, rose in rebellion. One of them, Judas the Hammer, was bold and able; he threw off the yoke, and the Jews were free for a little while. The Romans, however, drove out the Greeks; and then poor Israel had another master. Herod "the Great" built a gorgeous temple, the one Jesus visited, and where he taught sometimes. Herod was a wicked man, but he tried to make friends with the Jews. This brings us to the time of Jesus, where our lessons end.

## SCATTERED.

We know that Jerusalem was afterward destroyed by Titus, and the Romans scattered the Jews once more. Never since 70 A.D. have they come together as before. They are found all over the world. Their scriptures are bound up in our Bible. Many of them believe in a return, some time, to Palestine, and setting up a kingdom. But many have no such faith. The Jews to-day are divided, as they were at Babylon: some cling to the old Mosaic law, others have broadened into something larger, and are not anxious to rebuild Jerusalem.

### POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION: TO TEACHERS.

#### I. GOD IN HISTORY.

Either this world is in the keeping of a wise, foreseeing Power, or it is not. We believe in a God world. History shows how a force, greater than ourselves, makes for certain results. The Jewish nation represents religion ever growing to a high, spiritual form and prophesying, in the midst of darkness, what other nations did not see.

#### II. HEROISM AND SACRIFICE.

Let the review bring out some of the characters we have studied, to illustrate devotion and martyrdom. The religious motive and the patriotic motive have always been the strongest ones to create heroism unto death. Show this in instances from other parts of history.

#### III. REVELATION AND AUTHORITY.

The teacher should not leave the pupil in doubt as to the value and power of the Old Testament records. In our treatment we have exalted them, not lowered them. We have let in light to show what a deep sense of God the Jews had, have set that high which should be high, and placed the inferior where it belongs. The authority of the truth as found in the "Story of Israel" comes out more distinct in an honest, intelligent study of this wonderful people.

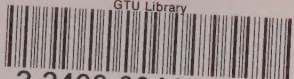




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